

**MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
AIR AND LAND PROTECTION DIVISION  
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES PROGRAM  
Standard Operating Procedures**

SOP #: MDNR-FSS-300 EFFECTIVE DATE: April 29, 2002

SOP TITLE: Use of Emergency Lights/Siren on Environmental Emergency Response Vehicles

WRITTEN BY: Jackson L. Bostic, Environmental Specialist III, Environmental Emergency  
Response Section, Environmental Services Program (ESP)

APPROVED BY: Earl Pabst, Director, ESP

SUMMARY OF REVISIONS: This SOP was reformatted and updated to clarify the procedures  
staff should follow when operating emergency vehicles.

APPLICABILITY: Applies to ESP Emergency Response and Field Services Section  
personnel who operate designated emergency vehicles when  
responding to hazardous substance emergencies.

DISTRIBUTION: MoDNR Intranet  
ESP FSS Section Chief  
ESP SOP Coordinator

RECERTIFICATION RECORD:

Date Reviewed				
Initials				

## 1.0 SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) covers the operation of the emergency lights and sirens on Environmental Emergency Response (EER) vehicles. This SOP is applicable to all ESP On-Scene Coordinators (OSCs) who drive EER vehicles when responding to hazardous substance emergencies. EER vehicles are covered under section 304.022 (3) (8) RSMo as vehicles “designated to perform hazardous substance emergency functions established pursuant to the provisions of sections 260.500 to 260.550, RSMo”.

## 2.0 HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

The State Vehicle Policy states that operators of state vehicles or private vehicles on state business must adhere to applicable traffic laws. Operators should avoid activity that may hinder safe operations such as inappropriate use of a cell phone; eating or reading while driving; and any other activity that may hinder the driver’s attentiveness. Operators and any passengers must wear seat belts. For further general guidelines on operating any state vehicle, refer to the Missouri State Vehicle Policy.

## 3.0 PERSONNEL QUALIFICATIONS

To operate an emergency vehicle, EER staff must possess a valid driver's license. EER staff must also be familiar with the procedures described in this SOP. The EER Section Chief shall ensure that all EER staff have received appropriate in-house training that covers the procedures described in this SOP and shall document the date(s) when training was received.

## 4.0 PROCEDURE

- 4.1 Emergency lights and sirens may be used on an EER vehicle when a prompt and early arrival to the scene of a hazardous substance emergency is warranted. When responding to a hazardous substance emergency, OSCs must balance the traffic law exemptions described in section 304.022 RSMo, the seriousness of the emergency situation and the need for safety. The OSC shall confer with the EER Duty Officer (DO) and/or the local Law Enforcement or Fire Department officials who are on-scene to determine if there is a real need to expedite arrival on-scene.
- 4.2 While an emergency vehicle is in motion and emergency lights are turned on, emergency sirens must also be activated. While parked at the scene of an incident, emergency lights may be used without sirens. Emergency lights or sirens should never be used when returning from the scene of an emergency response.

4.3 The following circumstances should be carefully considered when responding to a call to help determine whether the use of emergency lights and sirens are necessary:

- The type and seriousness of the emergency;
- Specific instructions concerning the emergency;
- The likelihood that the situation will worsen if the arrival of the OSC is delayed;
- Visibility, weather, road conditions, and the time of the day or night;
- The OSC's familiarity with the area;
- Vehicular and pedestrian traffic conditions;
- Limitations and condition of the EER vehicle and its emergency equipment.

4.4 When overtaking a vehicle from behind, the OSC will allow time for the driver to see the emergency lights and hear the siren before trying to pass the vehicle. Never pass a vehicle unless it is safe to do so. Always pass on the left side of traffic unless the traffic is stopped and the only way around is on the right shoulder.

*CAUTION -- The OSC should always be aware that not every vehicle might see or hear them.*

4.5 The OSC should take great care when entering an intersection while running emergency lights and sirens. When approaching a red signal, a stop sign, or yield sign, speed should be greatly reduced. Usually, the siren should be set at either "yelp" or "wail" when driving down a highway. Within 200 feet of the intersection, the cadence on the siren should be changed (e.g., "phaser") to further warn traffic and pedestrians that an emergency vehicle is approaching. It may be necessary to come to a complete stop until the intersection clears. **An emergency vehicle does not have the right-of-way until other vehicles yield.** In addition to changing the siren cadence, "sweeps" may be added to the array of emergency lights being used when approaching or entering an intersection.

4.6 When the EER vehicle is stopped or parked during an emergency response, in an area where traffic is passing (e.g. the shoulder of a highway), the rear flashing lights and/or rear light bar should be used. Under normal circumstances the front light bar and siren should not be used when stopped (see section 304.022 (4) (1) RSMo). The OSC may also want to consider deploying traffic cones to further alert oncoming traffic and protect those at the scene.

4.7 Prudent use of the light/siren mechanisms will reduce both citizenry and local law enforcement questioning the necessity of their use.

- 4.8 If the use of emergency lights is warranted, OSCs should use the following table for guidance in selecting the type of lights to use (the numbers in the table correspond to the labeling in Photo 1):

Type of Light	Recommended Use
Front Lightbar (#2)	Highway Driving
Rear Lightbar (#3)	Highway Driving
Light Bar Flash (#4)	Highway Driving
Rear Flash (#5)	Highway Driving
Sweeps (#6)	Intersection Warning lights
Takedowns (#7)	Off Road Use
Alley Light (#8)	Off Road Use
Alley Light (#9)	Off Road Use
Rear Flood Lights (#10)	Off Road Use
Note: The Light Bar Flash (#4) and Rear Flash (#5) switches are reversed on some of the EER vehicles.	

**Photo 1 - Light and Siren Panel**



LIGHT & SIREN PANEL			
1	Master Switch	9	Alley Light
2	Front Lightbar	10	Rear Flood Lights
3	Rear Lightbar	11	Silver Power Toggle
4	Light Bar Flash	12	Black Siren Switch
5	Rear Flash	13	Red Siren/Horn Switch
6	Sweeps	14	Public Address System (PA)
7	Takedowns	15	PA Mike
8	Alley Light		
Note: The Master Switch (#1) must be turned on in order to operate any of the lights or sirens.			

## 5.0 REFERENCES

- Missouri State Vehicle Policy
- Revised Statutes of Missouri, Section 304.022